DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Geographic News Bulletin

This bulletin is issued weekly by the Department of the Interior. The information in it is obtained from the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, Washington, D. C.

CONTENTS FOR WEEK OF FEBRUARY 28, 1921

1. Lower California
2. Will Elephants Go the Way of Buffaloes?
3. Malmedy: A Walloon Islet Relinquished by Prussia
4. New Rebellion in Garden of Eden
5. The Straits of Messina

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A GONDOLA POLED THROUGH THE SHALLOW CANALS THAT WATER THE GREAT DATE GARDENS: BAGDAD

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Lower California

COMMUNICATION makes for civilization. The airplane promises to make accessible many hitherto obscure regions, not along main lines of steamer or railway travel.

For example, the average American had little reason heretofore to go to Lower California. Recently, however, this peninsula has been the resting place for airplanes in flights from the Pacific Coast of the United States to the Panama Canal.

Frederick Simpich writes to the National Geographic Society as follows:

"The long, boot-shaped peninsula that swings down off the left-hand corner of the United States belongs to Mexico and is known on Mexican maps as 'Baja,' or Lower California. Early Spanish maps of America showed California as an island, due, no doubt, to limited explorations of this peninsula.

Harbors 15,000,000-Acre Ranch

"Scantly known as it is to the average American, this 800-mile-long strip of rocks, peaks, brush-grown mesas, and rare, fertile little valleys is a favorite haunt for many Yankee naturalists, fishermen, and big-game hunters; and here and there, in the more favored, well-watered, grassy spots of the higher ranges, hardy American cattlemen have built their adobe homes, where they enjoy the limitless freedom of vast unfenced areas. The Circle Bar Company of Ojos Negros Ranch runs cattle over a leased territory of two and a half million acres, and a British corporation holds title to something like fifteen million acres!

Away down at peaceful, picturesque La Paz, where Cortez repaired his schooners and where, centuries later, Walker, the Yankee filibuster, raised his flag, another Yankee today runs a busy little tannery, turning out 600 sides of good leather every day, for an American shoe factory. Here and there, in hill and valley, Americans are delving for metals or growing the staple *frijole*.

No Wheeled Vehicles

"But the country as a whole, owing to its many desert, waterless areas, is but sparsely settled, and, as one writer says, 'In all its turbulent, romantic history, since the halcyon days when Sir Francis Drake dropped his pirate anchor in Magdalena Bay, no wheeled vehicle has traversed its rough and tortuous length.'

"Rich as are its mines and fat as are its herds of cattle, its chief source of wealth lies in the cotton-growing regions around Mexicali.

"At the Colorado delta, at the head of the Gulf of California, which separates the Lower California peninsula from Sonora, more than at any other point on the whole border, the interests of the United States and of

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THE OLD MISSION TRAIL OF THE INTERIOR OF LOWER CALIFORNIA, LEADING THROUGH A FOREST OF DESERT PLANTS NEAR SAN FERNANDO

This trail, as were all the main trails in Lower California, was made by the Jesuits two or three centuries ago. The pole-like trees are the "cirio" (Idria columnaris): the many-branched shrub on the left is an "ocotilla" (Fouquiera splendens), which bears a brush-like mass of brilliant red flowers at the tips of the stalks. Small oval leaves grow along the stems.

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Will Elephants Go the Way of Buffaloes?

WILL the famous African elephants soon have to be protected, as our buffaloes in the United States, lest they become extinct?

The peaceful progress of farming is the menace which the elephant faces. Already the South African Cape Council has decided to exterminate the elephants because they despoil crops and sometimes kill agricultural laborers.

Sir Harry Johnston, famous African authority, tells of his experiences with African elephants in a communication to the National Geographic Society.

"If after many years of trial the African elephant is pronounced to be hopeless as a domestic animal (and it should be remembered that most male African elephants in captivity have shown themselves to be hopelessly savage), then at least for its magnificent ivory the creature is worth preserving as an asset to the state. If the Indian elephant shows himself to be more docile than the African elephant, it must be remembered, on the other hand, that he is of very little value for his ivory.

Three Men Killed in Capturing Animal

"One day a baby elephant was presented to me by an Uganda chief. It is a sad thing to relate, but three men were killed in attempting to capture the first elephant. I had expressed a wish one day for some elephants to experiment with in domestication, and the natives, with their usual desire to please me, were so ardent in their determination to gratify my wish and so determined in their pursuit of the young elephant that the mother knocked over and killed three of them. But they finally succeeded in their object, capturing the calf, and to my great surprise it trotted into camp behind one of the men.

"This little creature was at the time only four feet high. In two days it had become perfectly tame, and would follow a human being as readily as its own mother. It was easy enough to feed it with milk, because all that was required was a bottle with a long neck. This bottle was filled with cow's milk diluted with water, and poured down the elephant's throat. Soon all that one had to do was to place the neck of the bottle in the elephant's mouth, and the intelligent creature wound its trunk around the neck of the bottle, tilted it up, and absorbed the contents. For several weeks the elephant throve and became a most delightful pet. It would allow any one to ride on its back, and seemed to take pleasure and amusement in this exercise. It would find its way through diverse passages into my sitting-room, not upsetting or injuring anything, but deftly smelling and examining objects of curiosity with its trunk.

Elephant and Zebra Made Friends

"At the same time we had in captivity a young zebra, which was also to be the pioneer of a domesticated striped horse. These two orphans, the elephant and the zebra, became greatly attached to each other, though perhaps there

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Mexico are closely joined. This is due to the singular topography of that region (part of it is below sea-level) and to the diversion of water from the Colorado River. In the opinion of many irrigation engineers and political students, this peculiarly delicate problem of irrigation water rights, as between planters on the American and Mexican sides of the line, respectively, can be solved satisfactorily only by some joint treaty between the two republics, involving either the fixing of a neutral zone or the sale of a small strip of territory."

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NATIVE HOUSES AMONG THE DATE PALMS IN THE VALLEY AT SAN IGNACIO: LOWER CALIFORNIA

Over 50,000 date-palm trees like those that grow in the desert countries of the Old World are growing in this beautiful American oasis

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Malmedy: A Walloon Islet Relinquished by Prussia

IN patching together the picture puzzle of European nations to fit more nearly racial and historical units, the peace conference commission on Belgian claims approved Belgium's demand for Malmedy.

Malmedy long formed one of those alien racial clusters that seem to cling like barnacles to many a European boundary line.

In the case of Malmedy and the region about that town a group of Walloons was left in Rhenish Prussia when the historic Benedictine Abbey of Stavelot-Malmedy was cut in two in 1815. Malmedy fell to Prussia while six miles to the west, across the pre-war Belgian border, is Stavelot.

The latter town was the seat of the abbey which was independent until the Lunéville peace of 1801. The abbey fell to France until its partition 14 years later. The abbey was founded in the seventh century and later its abbots ranked as princes. They ruled many small villages along the Ambleve, on which Stavelot is situated, and along the Warche, which flows through Malmedy.

Ruled the Franks But Let Their Kings Reign

Charles Martel, grandfather of Charlemagne, who ruled the Franks while he let their kings reign on, won a decisive victory over Neustria at Stavelot 1200 years ago.

Malmedy lies in a pretty valley of the afore-mentioned river, 20 miles south of Aix-la-Chapelle. The town had less than 5,000 population before the war. Dyeing, paper-making and tanning were its industries.

The term Walloon is used to designate those Belgians who speak either French or a French dialect. The Walloons of Belgium desired Malmedy's restoration for lingual as well as for sentimental reasons. In Liege and Namur a movement for the revival of Walloon as a literary language—for it had been so used until about the fifteenth century—was well under way when the war began. In the midst of German-speaking neighbors Malmedy and its environs preserved the old Walloon dialect, whereas among many Belgian Walloons it has been supplanted by pure French.

Bulletin No. 3, February 28, 1921

UMI

was more enthusiastic affection on the part of the elephant, the zebra at times getting a little bored with constant embraces. Alas and alack! both elephant and zebra died eventually from the unwholesomeness, to them, of cow's milk.

"Several other elephants of the same age—that is to say, about four to six months old—were delivered into my hands, but all eventually died. Cow's milk appears to give these creatures eventually an incurable diarrhea, while all attempts at that early age to substitute for milk farinaceous substances have also resulted in a similar disease. I do not say that it is impossible to rear young elephants by hand for we have not made a sufficient number of experiments, but it is very difficult. I therefore favor the plan of attempting to catch elephants of perhaps a year old, at which age they do not require milk as an exclusive diet. One specimen of this age was caught and was readily tamed, and for aught I know is still alive in captivity."

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New Rebellion in Garden of Eden

MESOPOTAMIA, Upper and Lower, vies with Egypt in claiming the honor of being the home of ancient civilization," says a bulletin of the National Geographic Society, quoting from several communications concerning the land of Adam and Eve where the British recently sent more troops because of native uprisings.

"Mesopotamia comprises the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Here flourished the Chaldean, Babylonian, and Assyrian empires. The city of Bagdad, with all its glamor of mystery and magic, is in the heart of Mesopotamia.

"This was the richest land in the world, the granary of the ancients; yet, in spite of all that it has been it today lies largely waste, the desert sands have encroached upon the fertile fields, while the clogged canals have turned other portions into swamps and marshes.

Bagdad Line Built to Exploit This Region

"What population there is—not more than one million—is of Arab origin and the Arabic language is spoken throughout. There is, in fact, a very distinct dividing line between the Arabic and the Turkish-speaking portions of the former Ottoman Empire. This boundary corresponds with the line of the Bagdad Railway from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. It is for the exploitation of this rich land of Mesopotamia that the famous Bagdad line was built.

"Syria closes the east end of the Mediterranean and is bounded on the north by the Taurus Mountains. The Syrian and Arabian deserts limit further settlement to the east and south. But in connection with world commerce it has always been closely related to the fertile valleys of the Nile and the twin Mesopotamian rivers, and its commercial life of tomorrow cannot be divorced from that of Mesopotamia.

Land Fertile Today as Tens of Centuries Ago

"Mesopotamia is as fertile today as when it was the birthplace of human history and when the civilization that developed there had only the Nile Valley as a competitive field. But, like many parts of the earth once populous and now almost deserted, Mesopotamia is no halfway land. Such regions must either be the uncultivated roaming places of nomadic tribes or the seats of settled government and a centralized state. The inhabitants must either be few enough and mobile enough to seek through migrations the food upon which their flocks depend or stable enough to keep in repair vast irrigation systems which cause heavy crops to follow one another with assuring regularity.

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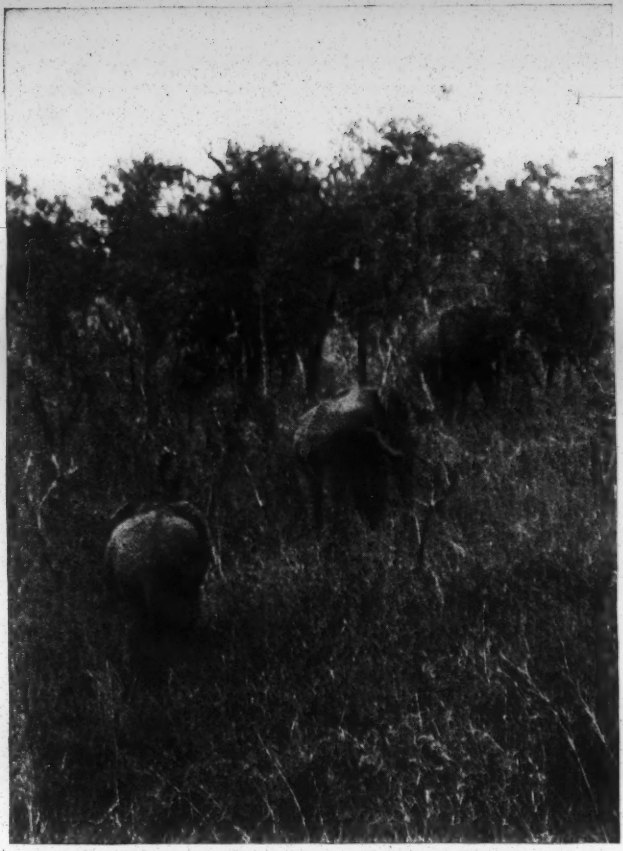

PART OF A HERD OF SEVEN BULLS TRACKED ALL DAY BY THE CAMERA MAN. THERE WERE NO LARGE-SIZED TUSKERS AMONG THEM

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The Straits of Messina

BETWEEN the rocky masses of Sicily and the "Toe" of the Italian peninsula, there is but a narrow lane of sea, known as the Straits of Messina. Yet this ribbon of water might be ocean-wide, judged by the diversity in customs between Italy and its island neighbor.

The Sicilian and Italian banks which border the Straits of Messina for nearly 25 miles to the east and west are among the most luxuriant to be found in a cruise of the Mediterranean. Magnificent golden groves of lemon and orange and orchards of pomegranate with their brilliant red fruit contrast wonderfully with the flowers of the almond trees which perfume the whole region.

Beyond the Straits is Mount Etna

The straits are entered from the Tyrrhenian Sea, on the north, at the narrowest point, the distance between Punta del Faro on the Sicilian shore and the mainland lighthouse on Punta Pezzo being not more than two miles. The whole of the Calabrian coast is thickly sown with villages, some clinging to the beach, while others clamber up the sides of well-wooded hills which culminate in the towering Montalto, rising to an elevation of more than a mile above the sea. Beyond the straits to the southwest, looms ever-threatening Etna, the highest volcano in Europe.

The most important city situated on the straits is the once magnificent seaport of Messina, which boasted a population of 150,000 inhabitants before 'the world's most cruel earthquake' of December 28, 1908, tossed nearly a hundred thousand lives away.

Messina Harbor Largest in Italy

The harbor of Messina is the largest and safest in the kingdom of Italy, with a depth of more than 30 fathoms. Before the great calamity it was visited annually by more than 5,000 vessels which brought cargoes of wheat, cotton, wool and hardware, and took away in exchange lemons, oranges, almonds, wines, olive oil and silks. Much of its commerce was and still is carried on with the mainland of the kingdom by means of a ferry line to Villa San Giovanni, only four and a half miles away, while Reggio, the chief seaport on the Italian side of the straits, and also the chief earthquake sufferer, next to Messina, is ten miles to the southeast. Ferry boats ply between these points, too. Scilla, Fare, Catona, Pellaro, Scallita and Galati are minor towns on the shores of the straits.

The historical records of Messina and the neighboring settlements contain many accounts of bombardments, raids, and piratical descents during the Punic and Roman wars, and ravaging expeditions by Goths, Normans and Saracens, while earthquakes prior to the latest tragedy left their indelible

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"Various factors delayed the inevitable reopening of the historic trade route across Syria and Mesopotamia in modern times. The advance of the Turk threw Europe back upon itself to develop internally, and the discovery of America turned the attention of the peoples away from the spices and wealth of the East to the boundless resources and rich prizes of the West. The discovery of the sea route around Africa made available a safer passage to opulent India.

Trade Followed the Railway

"Nowhere, however, did trade follow the railway to a greater extent than along the Bagdad line, and in the spring of 1914 Aleppo was a thriving commercial center of German trade. At the hotels engineers and merchants crowded the dining-rooms and talked of a mighty future in Mesopotamia. That summer, war came, and the burning question of styles was rapidly succeeded by one of food enough to keep body and soul together.

"Just south of the Hittite ruins at Carchemish the Bagdad Railway crosses the muddy Euphrates and enters Mesopotamia. For the present the line to Bagdad and the Persian Gulf will monopolize the attention of the road-builders; but slowly and surely the iron pathways of commerce will extend north to the copper fields of Asia Minor and the rich plains where Turkish tobacco is grown, up through Armenia to the Caucasus, across Persia to Turkestan, and across Afghanistan or Baluchistan to the gates of India.

Routes Essential to Asia's Future

"War may not be entirely a thing of the past, but the Syrian and Mesopotamian routes are essential to the commercial and industrial development of Europe and the cultural development of Asia.

"Fifty miles west of Bagdad, along the Euphrates, lies the region now commonly regarded as the Garden of Eden. To irrigate this Eden and to reclaim millions of fertile acres around Bagdad was the stupendous task to which the Turkish government addressed itself.

"At Mussayeb, on the Euphrates, a pre-war traveler saw 4,000 Arabs digging like moles in the Babylonian plain, making a new channel for the river. In the dry bed of this artificial channel an enormous dam was built.

"Nebuchadnezzar's vast irrigation system, which once watered all Babylonia, can still be easily traced for miles about Bagdad. One giant canal, the Narawan, runs parallel with the Tigris for nearly 300 miles; it is 350 feet wide, and all about it the take-off and laterals may still be identified. Herodotus said he found a 'forest of verdure from end to end' when he visited Mesopotamia."

scars from time to time, particularly in 1783. Nor has plague spared this region. In 1740 Messina alone lost 40,000 of her population by disease, while 114 years later cholera removed 16,000.

The Story of Scylla and Charybdis

Homer did not accord a definite habitation for his terrible sea-creatures, Scylla and Charybdis, but mariners familiar with the perils of the rocks on the Italian side of the straits and with the strong eddies near the harbor of Messina, saw in the mythical monsters an explanation of such dangers. Scylla was supposed to be a horrible creature with six heads and a dozen feet, who barked like a dog. She dwelt in a lofty cave from which she rushed whenever a ship tried to pass beneath, and she would snatch the unlucky seamen from the rigging or as they stood at the helm endeavoring to guide their vessels through the perilous passage. Charybdis dwelt under a rock only a bowshot away, on the opposite shore. The second creature sucked in and blew out seawater three times a day, and woe to the ship caught in the maelstrom of its mouth!

Poets who came after the great Greek bard embroidered the legend to suit their fancy. Ovid, for example, described Scylla as the beautiful daughter of a sea-god who incurred the jealousy of one of the immortals and who was changed into a sea-monster. A second transformation made her a rock perilous to navigators. Some poets described Charybdis as an old woman who seized and devoured the cattle of Hercules, and in punishment for this act the demigod's father, all-powerful Zeus, cast her into the sea where her appetite persisted, but her tastes changed from cattle to ships and seamen.

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A BABY ELEPHANT'S MARBLE

A fragment of a termite hill that the elephants had broken off and rolled about on muddy ground until it became nearly round. They had evidently rolled it to this point from a considerable distance, as it was of black earth, while the ground where it was photographed was yellow. Baby elephants, like most young animals, are fond of a frolic with one another